

Devotional Studies No. 24

Conduct in the New Age

Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, sets forth the characteristics of one who through faith is righteous. When one is placed in a right relationship with God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, this new relationship demands ethical behavior that brings honor and glory to the Creator of the universe. As a result of justification by faith, Paul begins Chapter Twelve with “I urge” (παρακαλῶ, parakalw, “I appeal”) you. Unless one’s life and deeds are in harmony, or agreement, with the Gospel, then the Gospel has no significance for this individual. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen of Romans relate to one’s Christian performance. Since one is no longer under the “old aeon” (old age), but under the “new aeon” (new age), one’s life must be molded and shaped in synchronization, or harmony, with the “new aeon.” As one reflects upon Chapter Twelve, one observes two characteristics that are to envelop every believer—a new life in Christ and a new life in love.

Paul begins Chapter Twelve with a call to “spiritual worship.” He then proceeds to the development of this new worship by beginning with a “life in love” and then approaches the concluding exhortation with one’s new “life in Christ,” which life exemplifies itself in right conduct. He speaks about love and how love is the fulfilling of the Law (**Romans 13:8**). In one’s relationship to God and to His children, the guiding principle is “to walk according to love” (**14:15**). Everyone should put his or her conduct in conformity with the “new aeon.” These chapters give a brief summary of Paul’s ethics. One recalls Paul’s earlier comments about one’s baptism and the implications of this action. He writes: “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with” (**Romans 6:6**). Prior to this statement, he drew this conclusion from one’s baptism: “we walk in newness of life” (**6:4**).

The Gospel transforms one’s ways and conduct. When one is in Christ, one’s actions are to be different from what it was formerly. Every person should examine himself or herself with the following questions: Is my way of life in Christ different from my past way of life in the world? Is God first in my life? Do I really and truly love His children? If one does not love God and love His children, one is not walking a life worthy of his or her calling. To the Thessalonians, Paul encourages the believers to live a life “worthy of God” who calls them into His “kingdom and glory” (**2 Thessalonians 2:12**). To the Ephesians, Paul, too, admonished the believers to “live a life worthy of the calling” (**Ephesians 4:1**). And last, but not least, the words of Paul to the Colossians are well worth citing for encouragement to live a holy life: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him” (**Colossians 2:6**).

Christians are to devote themselves to the things of God. Paul writes: “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (**Romans 6:13**). Once more, the question confronts every believer: What does it mean to walk in harmony with the new age? Paul answers the question. It means to *walk in Christ* (**12:3-8**) and to *walk in love* (**9-21**). Christian love demands humility (**12:3**). One is never to promote and honor oneself over and above other believers (**12:3-8**). Paul drives home this point when he writes: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves” (**12:10**). Not only is this God’s way for His people, but, at the same time, God does not want His people “lacking in zeal”; he wants them to keep their spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” (**12:11**). How is your behavior toward God and toward one another? Listen to Paul as he endeavors to drive home the will of God for His people:

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (**13:12-14**)